

10 December 1981

Press Release of [] Imagery

BACKGROUND

- o On 3 December 1981 at approximately 1500 hours, the Office of Chairman, COMIREX received notification from a DIA action officer that within an hour DOD was planning to release in an UNCLASSIFIED environment [] U-2 imagery flown over Central America to the press corps at the Pentagon. []

- o Airborne reconnaissance activities involving overflight are considered "national" missions, hence the call to COMIREX to obtain DDCI concurrence on this release. []

- o The Office of Chairman, COMIREX had no knowledge of the intended release. Calls to the office of the D/ICS and DDCI also were negative on this matter. The DIA action officer could provide the chairman's office with little or no information about the circumstances surrounding the proposed release (i.e. what specific material, for what purpose, etc.). []

- o As the one hour time frame was rapidly passing, the essentials of the proposed release - as we knew them - were conveyed to the SA/DDCI for relay to the DDCI. COMIREX was subsequently informed of DDCI non-concurrence. From calls to State Dept. we were also informed of high level state objections to the release. []

- o DDCI non-concurrence was relayed to DIA at approximately 1540 at which point it was felt that the release was stopped. []

- o We were subsequently informed by DIA that the briefing began earlier than expected and had already taken place. []

- o Later we were advised that the DDCI had approved disclosure of approximately 3 photos to the Washington Press Corps by the Office of Asst. Sec. Def. for Public Affairs on a "deep background" basis and that this approval had been conveyed to Gen. Stilwell's office. []

SECRET

ISSUE

The point of concern in this matter is the lack of prior coordination with representatives of the DCI for release of classified imagery materials of national interest to the press. Clearly with less than 60 minutes to obtain facts and evaluate the pros and cons of such a release, errors and misinformation can occur. Additionally, consideration needs to be given to the impact of disclosure to the press, which if leaked could have an impact on the ability of the U.S. to conduct similar missions in the area and the safety of future missions. [REDACTED]

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RECOMMENDATION

That barring emergency or crisis situations, DOD be requested to provide sufficient prior notification to DCI representatives of any such future releases to allow for Intelligence Community coordination, particularly with State Dept. and within CIA. [REDACTED]

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